

**Office of the First Lady**  
**Press Office**  
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Deputy Assistant to the President and  
Director of Communications to the First Lady  
**Contents: Files**

Archived from OEOB 103 by Katie McCormick Lelyveld on January 12, 2001

**Box 9 of 13**

- Adoption
- Bankruptcy
- Black Panthers
- HRC Bio/Resume
- Breast Cancer Legislation & Clips
- Chappaqua
- Chelsea
- Child Care
- Child Care/Crime
- Children's Tour Information
- Eleanor Clift
- Clippings RE: HRC
- Creators Syndicate
- Elgin Marbles
- Entertainment Ratings
- FAPE
- Fashion
- Gracie Awards
- Greece
- Guest Lists
- Higher Educations
- Interview Transcripts
- Israel/Middle East
- Israel/Middle East 2000
- Issues Notes
- ODP Issues Updates February – March, 2000
- ODP Issues Updates May – June, 2000
- Jewish Issues
- Keepers
- Ladies Home Journal 2000
- Lawsuit
- Magazine Info and Stats
- Millennium
- Northern Ireland
- Oral Histories
- Overnight Guests/Movies
- Paris Match
- Product Safety
- Ray Report
- Ritalin
- Sharpton
- State Dinner News Clips & Memos
- Trafficking
- Travel Info – Fall 2000
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
- Vietnam Info – 11/00
- Vital Voices
- White House 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- Year of Humanities and Arts

Enclosures filed in  
Oversize Attachments #

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Toby C. Graff  
03/17/2000 11:55:46 AM

ADOPTION/  
LARRY KING LIVE

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: Transcript of First Lady on Larry King Live

For anyone who missed it, we'll have the tape this afternoon....but here's a transcript:

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CNN Larry King Live  
March 16, 2000

**First Lady Praises Adoption; Panel of Adoptive Mothers Discuss Their Experiences**

LARRY KING, HOST: Tonight, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton on adoption. She wants you to know there are thousands of kids who need it. Entertainer Marie Osmond joins us, one of four fabulous adoptive moms joining us in Los Angeles. With her is actress Donna Mills -- she has an adoptive daughter -- actress Valerie Harper -- got an adopted daughter, too -- actress-singer Nell Carter, two adopted sons, and in Columbus, Ohio, Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's and founder of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption. That and more next on LARRY KING LIVE.

Good evening. There are about 120,000 adoptions every year in the United States, but there are still tens of thousands of kids waiting to be part of a loving family. Hillary Rodham Clinton started working on children's issues long before she entered the White House, but she's made adoption a special priority as first lady, and it's in that role she joins us from New York. We'll save talk of her Senate run for an upcoming show.

Hillary, why adoption? You're not adopted. You didn't adopt Chelsea?

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES: You know, Larry, I think it goes back to the work I did 30 years ago when I was in law school, and I decided that I really wanted to do everything possible to help children, and the most vulnerable of our children are children who are caught up in the foster care system, who are given up for adoption, who are abused and neglected. The very first case I did as a young law student was to work with a lawyer to try to help a foster mother adopt a young foster child, and in those days, back in 1970, oftentimes the decisions were made not on the best interests of the child, but who had the biggest house or the most material possessions. And we've come a long way in making adoption much more available and affordable for all people.

And I hope one of the messages of your show tonight is that we have 400,000 children in foster care. About a hundred thousand of those are available to be adopted. We have many children who are not in the foster care system, but who are given up for adoption, and we don't have enough permanent loving homes for those children, so anything we can do we ought to try.

KING: Why -- is it that most people who want to adopt want babies? They don't want to adopt the 4-year-old or 7-year-old in the foster home?

CLINTON: Well, I think that's part of it. But I also think that the system has not been as user-friendly as it needed to be. You know, starting back in '93 and '94, we began to try to change the laws at the national level, to try to begin to expedite decisions about whether a child would go back to the child's biological family or be freed for adoption, and we've done a lot of events at the White House. I know that Dave Thomas will be on with you, and he has been a terrific ally in our fight change and really open up the adoption system.

And you know, one of the great joys that I have had in the years in the White House is seeing that magic happen when a young child is adopted and finds a permanent home. We have opened the White House time and time again. I remember, particularly, a young woman who had been in foster care for most of her life who was turning 13. All she wanted is what any child wants, which is a room of her own and a family of her own.

And so there are so many success stories that I hope everybody will be sharing and knowing that there are a lot of children out there waiting. We now provide more financial support through the federal government for people who adopt and tax credits. We provide support for people, especially, who adopt children with special needs, physical or emotional nature, so there's a lot of help out there.

KING: The late Bob Constantine, the writer, once wrote, "I have four children. Two are adopted. I forget which two."

CLINTON: Yes.

KING: Has society accepted this more?

CLINTON: I think so. And I know that as I travel around New York, I meet so many people who are products of the foster care system themselves, who are adopted, who are adoptive parents.

You know, I was just yesterday at Central High School out on Long Island, and I was having a town hall meeting at the high school about education. We talked about everything -- you know, overcrowding, and qualified teachers and the kinds of courses kids have to take, and then a young man stood up, and he said he was in the foster care system, and he wanted to know what would happen to him when he graduated from high school, and I was so pleased I could tell him that we changed the law last session of Congress. It was a bipartisan effort, so that we could continue to provide support services.

You know, it used to be, Larry, that when a child aged out of foster care, either on his 18th birthday or when he graduated from high school, whichever came first, there would be literally a knock on the door of his foster home or his group home, and there would be somebody standing there with a big old black garbage bag, and the kid would be told to put his belongings in it because he was moving. Well, we've now changed that, and I want to thank people on both sides of the aisle. You know, we have brought together some unlikely allies. I worked with the late John Chafee, a wonderful man who was very devoted to kids, and in the House, I worked with Tom DeLay, who doesn't have the same views on a lot of things I do, but cares about foster kids and adoption. So I think there's a growing public awareness and acceptance, and there is now more support for people willing to adopt. And I really hope that we can increase the number of children adopted. We set a goal. We're trying to reach that goal, of doubling and then tripling the number of children adopted out of our American public system by the year 2002.

KING: One other thing, Hillary, do minorities have a tougher time being adopted?

CLINTON: Well, you know, it's interesting, because there are a lot of informal adoptions in the minority communities, particularly African-Americans, who have always taken in children of cousins, or grandchildren or people in some kinship relationship. I would like to see us do more to support that kind of guardianship and custody arrangement rather than having a child be put into the foster care system. If we can keep that child in some system of relatives or kinship, I think it would be better.

And the other point I wanted to make is that yesterday, after this young man stood up at the high school, another young man stood up and said that his mother had been a foster mother for years, and it got so difficult, and the kind of compensation available was so inadequate for what is truly a 24-hour-a-day job, being a mother. I'd like to see us give more respect to the people who do a good job of fostering children, as well as helping more people understand what adoption could mean in their lives as well.

KING: Thanks, Hillary. Thanks so much. I'll send your best to the rest of the panel as they join us.

CLINTON: Thank you. Thank you so much, Larry.

KING: I'll see a lot of you on the trail.

CLINTON: I'll look forward to it.

KING: Hillary Clinton, the first lady of the United States.

Our panel of Marie Osmond, Valerie Harper, Donna Mills, Nell Carter, Dave Thomas and the director of his foundation joins us right after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Welcome back. We're going to bring our panel on in stages, and we begin with Marie Osmond, the cohost of "Donny and Marie," the very